



Mount Saviour Chronicle

THE BENEDICTINE MONASTERY OF MOUNT SAVIOUR
P. O. BOX 3066, ELMIRA, NEW YORK

NUMBER 19

ALL SOULS' 1961

Dear Friends of Mount Saviour:

A year ago when All Souls' Day approached and we sent you a Chronicle the memory of our dear Brother Christopher whom God had called to Himself a few months before was uppermost in our minds. Now a year has passed — a year without him? We should not call it that. Flowers are growing on his grave, a token of his living presence among us. We have experienced in so many ways that the relation to those who have gone before us in the sleep of peace is not determined by the sorrow of separation, nor merely by the memories of the past, or hope of future reunion, but by the way in which they remain an integral part of our life here and now. This thought may startle many of you, and for this reason I would like to enlarge on it a little.

We live in an age when our life is filled to the brim with happenings of all sorts, with news, with tasks and worries and obligations and demands. The present claims all our attention. As a result our memory grows shorter and shorter. Those who are out of sight fade fast from our mind's horizons. Whoever wants attention has to be there and has to make himself heard, or he is forgotten. This situation deeply affects our relation to those who have departed this life. They are the silent generation; they cannot make themselves heard. Moreover they are now more out of sight than they have ever been before. In times past one had to cross the cemetery to reach one's parish church. Now the city has driven the cemeteries farther and farther away from the scene of our daily life. In times past the care of the graves was left to the loving attention and initiative of those close to the deceased. Today professionals take care of it all, on the basis of long-term contract. It works automatically, with a minimum of effort as far as the individual grave is concerned. The very thought of the deceased is limited to a few "official" occasions.

As you see, the social milieu in which we live gives us little support in any effort we might like to make in the direction of making the deceased an integral part of our daily existence. We have to turn to our own personal ex-

perience in order to awaken in ourselves the loving initiative which draws the departed into our life, listening to them, speaking to them, experiencing their loving presence, helping them, receiving their assistance. There is one fact which stands out in our experience and it might be well to start from it. That fact is that death is judgment. It strikes like a bolt of lightning, lightning of truth that burns away the lies behind which men try to hide. It makes our thoughts manifest. It reveals our love's true self. Lack of love may be well covered behind solemn faces and observance of social ritual. But death is stronger than ritual. No one who assists at a funeral is deceived by appearances. Selfish love experiences death only as a loss; it refuses to be consoled. But sorrow alone is no proof of true love, as long as it only laments the loss of one who served our personal needs. Only where true and selfless love has bound hearts together has death lost its sting. Such love even on earth is free from space and time. When personal love rises beyond possessiveness and becomes a "marriage of true minds", it ceases to be "time's fool". It is a seal upon the heart, unique and eternal. It cannot be replaced, nor can it be repeated. The one who thus meets another person will say to him with Robert Browning: "Never say of me that I am dead." To those who truly love, death can never be the last word. The one left behind is bound to suffer deeply from the loss bodily separation imposes on him because in this life bodily presence is the means through which we experience spiritual unity. But in the depth of his heart he knows that the deceased continues to live, and to live for him. He will find a thousand ways to keep the deceased friend or husband or child part and parcel of his life.

Everybody who reads this knows in his heart what I am talking about. He may feel, however, that this experience of deep personal love is not given to many mortals, and that even in its purest form love between human beings remains a promise never to be fulfilled. The message of All Souls' Day is of a different nature. It is not addressed to an elite of the mind. It is the solemn affirmation of the living solidarity between all Christians here on earth

and all those who have gone before us with the sign of faith. No barriers separate the members of this enormous community. Whether rich or poor, old or young, servant or free, black or white, learned or unlettered, it makes no difference because "the Son who sanctifies, and the sons who are sanctified have a common origin, all of them; he is not ashamed then to own them as his brethren. I will proclaim Your renown, he says, to my brethren: with the church around me I will praise You: and elsewhere he says, I will put my trust in him, and then: Here stand I, and the children God has given me." (Hebrews 2:11-13) The one Lord shed His blood for the sanctification of the many, who then in Him became one: "one Body, and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." (Ephesians 4:4-6) This unity is not limited to those living on earth. It extends to those who, in this one Body and one Spirit and one Lord and one faith and one baptism left this earth in death. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, Saint Paul continues: "What is meant here by 'He ascended', but that he first descended also to the lower regions of the earth? He who descended is the same also who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things."

Here a new dimension opens up, which reaches far beyond the realm of the most noble human love: the divine love which urged the Father to send His Son to become man, to die in propitiation for our sins, to descend into hell, to rise again from the dead, to ascend to the right hand of the Father, whence to pour out his Spirit into the hearts of those who believe in Him. It is this love which is truly stronger than death, so that all who enter into it through faith and baptism can truly say: "Never say of me that I am dead." He belongs to Christ, and Christ said of Himself: "I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and behold I live in endless ages, and I hold the keys of death and of the grave." (Apoc. 1:18) Death cannot separate us from Him. For this reason the Church begins the commemoration of the faithful departed with the solemn invitation: "The King for whom all live: come, let us adore Him!"

While it is true, then, that the general atmosphere of present-day civilization is apt to bury in oblivion very soon those who have departed this life, and while the bond of true human love wants eternity, is the privilege of a comparative few, and is unable to plumb the depths of desolation, sin, or dereliction in innumerable souls, we see that our heavenly Father has Himself built a bridge binding us to the deceased, Christ, King of the living and the dead, and His life-giving breath, the Holy Spirit. He is the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Him, though he is dead, will live on, and whoever has life, and has faith in Him, cannot die to all eternity. Those who through faith and baptism are incorporated into Christ are never remote from the resurrection. We should not think of it as something to happen in the distant future, on the "Last Day". On the contrary it is a present reality from the moment Christ gave Himself to us.

"He who believes in me, though he is dead, will live on." For this reason the Lord says of His friend Lazarus that he has fallen asleep but that He will go and awaken him from sleep. (John 11:11) For like reasons we Chris-

tians speak of death as "falling asleep", and of our departed ones as those who "sleep in the sleep of peace," and the place of their burial as "cemetery", which means "sleeping place." This way of speaking we do not restrict to those who died in the odor of sanctity, but to all those who have gone before us "with the sign of faith". We do not intend to say that all who die "in Christ" are perfect, and that this perfection is the reason they now live. We do not close our eyes to their defects, but we do know that they are in the hands of God's mercy, and it is in this realm and power of his forgiving love that we live with those who have died under the sign of faith.

No one has expressed this more beautifully than Saint Augustine in the lines he devoted to the memory of his mother. "Now that my heart is healed of that wound, in which there was perhaps too much of earthly affection, I pour forth to You, o our God, tears of a very different sort for Your handmaid — tears that flow from a spirit shaken by the thought of the perils there are for every soul that dies in Adam. For though she had been made alive in Christ, and while still in the body had so lived that Your name was glorified in her faith and her character, yet I dare not say that from the moment of her regeneration in baptism no word issued from her mouth contrary to Your command . . . Thus, my Glory and my Life, God of my heart, leaving aside for this time her good deeds, for which I give thanks to You in joy, I now pray to You for my mother's sins. Grant my prayer through the true Medicine of our wounds, who hung upon the cross and who now sitting at Your right hand makes intercession for us." (Confessions, Book IX, ch.13) The most perfect way to enter into living contact with those who sleep in the sleep of peace is, therefore, the offering of the Lord's life-giving sacrifice at the altar. Saint Augustine continues by saying that his mother's one desire had been to be remembered at the altar after her death, the altar "on which she knew that the holy Victim was offered, by whom the handwriting is blotted out of the decree that was contrary to us, by which offering too the enemy was overcome who, reckoning our sins and seeking what may be laid to our charge, found nothing in Him, in whom we are conquerors." And so he concludes with the prayer: "Inspire, O my Lord, my God, inspire Your servants, my brethren, that as many of them as read this may remember at Thy altar Your servant Monica, with Patricius, her husband, by whose bodies You didst bring me into this life."

This remembrance at the altar is more than a merely mental act of our weak memory. It is a communion, a meeting in the triumphant power of Christ's victory over death, and yet it is infinitely far removed from the kind of violence which tries to force the "spirits" into the reach of our bodily presence. It takes place in an attitude of respect for the majesty of death, through which man is withdrawn, once and forever, from all human influence or power, so that all we can "do" for the departed is done "per modum suffragii", as the Church says, "as a humble prayer."

This All Souls' Day finds a fourth grave added to the three which were in our little cemetery last year, that of our dear brother in Christ, Francis C. Medina, as secular oblate, Brother Aclred. God called him in the very flower

of life. His youth had been sheltered under the protection of truly Christian parents, from whom he inherited a deep love for the Church. For a long while he weighed the possibility of dedicating his life to God in the religious state, until he found the peace of Christ in a marriage richly blessed by God with a love that is stronger than death and lives in him, in his wife, in his three little children, in all who knew him, and in his brethren of Mount Saviour. Remember him at the altar.

F. Damiano Wignam, O.S.B.

SUGGESTED READING FOR ALL SOULS' SEASON

Martin Jugie, *Purgatory and the Means to Avoid It*. Cork: Mercier, 1949.

Romano Guardini, *The Last Things*. London: Burns and Oates, 1954.

J. P. Arendzen, *Purgatory and Heaven*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960. (paperback).

R. W. Gleason, S. J., *The World to Come*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958.

Barry Ulanov, *Death: A Book of Preparation and Consolation*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959.

Maurice Becque, C.Ss.R.; Louis Becque, C.Ss.R., *Life after Death*. New York: Hawthorn, 1960 (20th Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, #28).

Jean Charles Didier, *Death and the Christian*. New York: Hawthorn, 1961 (20th Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, #55).

A YEAR OF THE LORD

We have at last reached the days when, as the leaves turn color and fall, and winter approaches, the year is running out. It is a time for looking back and giving thanks to God for all the gifts the seasons have brought us.

Early prospects were bleak; the year got off to a miserable start, with snow piled on snow well into the spring. The thaw brought raw and rainy weeks and little sun. Easter fell into this stormy weather bringing the Sun of Justice into our midst, but leaving the sun of the heaven still veiled in clouds through April and May. We looked out at the brethren on tractors dragging the fields between rain-showers to prepare them for seeding and wondered: What more terrible days could be imagined!

Hindsight forces us to revise these slightly pessimistic musings, for since the day the seasons finally turned and summer arrived we have been the special object of God's loving care, and have had what in many ways is the most fruitful of all our ten summers. Because of the spring rains and the periodic rains of the summer we have had our richest crop of silage, enough to fill the silo over

last year's level and provide the cows with a daily ration of green-feed cut directly from the fields each morning until very recently. It is the first year our fields have not completely dried up during August, so that now, still green with the late summer's growth to ward off frost, they make the turning leaves seem even redder, and help make this autumn, too, the most beautiful of the ten. Father Placid is flushed with justifiable pride as he carries in the grapes and apples from the orchard, and Father Luke, too, as he keeps on providing roses from the seemingly ever-blooming bushes.

The material blessings of the summer culminated with our annual Dedication Day on September 17. We had some misgivings about its success, since it was postponed a month to make room for our tenth anniversary celebration on August 6. Once again, our doubt was groundless. D-Day-in-September was the most successful we have ever celebrated, a glorious day, very warm, but not so oppressively so as an August Sunday might have been, bringing out great numbers of friends, old and new. We all felt it was a blessed day, and these feelings are also those of the D-Day Committee of helpers from Elmira and Corning, as well as of all who worked in the various booths or contributed in cash or in kind in answer to the appeal for support we made in our last Newsletter. Delighted that all these friends feel as we do about the success of the day, we are equally delighted to be able to have the last word, and make that a word of hearty thanks to all of them, those who have been helping us for years, and those who have just begun to help carry the financial burdens of the monastery.

The year has given us a classic lesson in not counting, or discounting, our chicks before they are hatched, especially when one is sure that the grace and bounty of Providence will inevitably have its say in making up what we, monks and all other men, cannot hope to accomplish on our own. We are grateful for the health and help God has given us during this most wonderful of summers, and among the cheerful givers of our acquaintance none has more succinctly expressed the community's optimism and thankfulness than Bishop Kearney when he broke ground for our new buildings on August 6, saying: "Thank God I cannot say with the wily wretch in the Gospel: 'To dig I am unable'!"

MEMORIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Recently we have been concentrating on plans for the enlargement of our chapel, and it proves to be a very difficult and delicate task. Dedication Day showed once again that the chapel means "Mount Saviour" in the minds of most of our friends. Consequently any of the necessary chapel alterations will have to be carried out in such a way as not to alter this image of the monastery. We are presently working with Mr. Ronald Casseti, an Elmira architect, to solve the problem.

As mentioned in our last Newsletter, in connection with the chapel changes we have commissioned Mr. George Nakashima of New Hope, Pa., to design new furnishings. Some of these, the choir benches and lecterns, have already arrived and are in use. Much still remains to be done.

For all these furnishings, and for other chapel memorial opportunities we enclose a separate list.

Religious and those who have already contributed the amount they intend to the Building Fund are asked to disregard the appeal contained on the enclosed list. Rather than segregate their copies of the Chronicle from the general mailing, we have thought it better to include them, but to insert this note for them.

ALL SOULS

We shall remember in our Masses on All Souls' Day and throughout November the names of the departed sent to us for this purpose. A list for the names is included. These lists will be placed under the altar for the month.

EAST GERMAN RELIEF

We gladly recommend to all our friends the work of the Rev. Heinrich K. Rumph and the American Saint Boniface Society, 1050 East 23rd St., New York 66, N.Y., now more than ever involved in easing the burden of the Church in the part of Germany that remains behind the Iron Curtain.

MASS OFFERINGS

We are in great need of Mass offerings, especially for Low Masses. Our friends are asked to remember us when they wish to have Masses offered.

Priest-oblates and other priest-friends are asked to send us stipends which they cannot personally take care of, or to secure stipends for us.

We shall be glad to send to those who request them a supply of Mass cards for the living and for the dead be filled out and sent to the family of the deceased or to the person whose name day, birthday, wedding day, or other special anniversary you may wish to remember by the gift of Masses. Then send us the name of the person for whom the Mass is to be offered, indicating whether he is living or deceased, together with your offering and your name and address.

NEWS

August 24 — Visit of a group of exchange students, one each from France, Holland, Nigeria, and Rhodesia, brought by Rev. and Mrs. Lee Klaer of the First Presbyterian Church of Elmira.

August 29 — Two arrivals, one our Father James, returning from a crash course in bee-keeping at the University of Pennsylvania and a visit to the library at Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Pa.; the other, Father Garcia Columbas of the Abbey of Montserrat in Spain, on his way home after having given a summer course in theology to the Benedictine Sisters of Saint Joseph Convent, Minnesota.

September 1 — Large retreat begin for the Charles de Foucauld Fraternity, given by our Father Gregory. Among

the retreatants was Miss Dorothy Day, the heart of the Catholic Worker movement.

September 6 — Arrival of Father Raphael Hombach of Maria Laach who will remain here for an indefinite stay and help in the formulation of ceremonies and customs.

September 8 — Brother Paul Newey of Decatur, Georgia makes his simple profession.

Father Augustine leaves to preach a week's retreat to the Sisters of Jesus Crucified in Devon, Pa., a congregation for physically handicapped women.

September 14 — We are hit by the tail end of "hurricane Carla", not much of a storm, but violent enough to do slight damage to the orchard and bring down the wire of the inter-com system that had been tacked to a weak limb of an old Baldwin apple tree. The wire has been tacked to a stronger limb this time.

September 15 — Retreat begins for married couples from Syracuse, given by the Rev. Daniel Berrigan, S.J., of LeMoyne College, Syracuse.

September 17 — DEDICATION DAY: says our Chronicler: "After cold night, temp. at daybreak was 44°. Light frost on grass.

"Mass at 11 — good congregation. Big crowd all day, many remaining until 7 p.m. Good receipts."

September 21 — Arrival of the Rev. Laurence Bourget, O.C.S.O., American definitor (representative) of the Trappist Order in Rome, for an overnight visit. Father Laurence had returned to this country for the election of the new abbot of Spencer Abbey, Massachusetts, the Right Reverend Dom Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O., at whose blessing on September 25 Father Gregory represented our community.

September 23 — Professor Heinrich Kronstein of Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, and the Institute of International and Foreign Trade Law of Georgetown University, one of our oldest friends, gave a very moving conference on the evolution of American foreign policy, with special reference to the Berlin crisis.

September 24 — Visit of 50 to 60 boys and girls of the North Presbyterian Church of Elmira Youth Fellowship, guided by Associate Pastor Pressaw.

September 26 — Fall outing of the community, a cold and gray day made enjoyable thanks to the house and hospitality of Mrs. Charles E. Githler on the shore of Lake Keuka.

September 28 — Father Placid begins high priority work: wine-making, after having put Socks, the dog borrowed from the Elmira SPCA to keep deer out of the vineyard, into the truck to be taken back to town. Most of the grapes had been harvested, and Socks' work was apparently done.

September 30 — Father Gregory leaves for the celebration of the 90th birthday of his Mother, Mrs. Henning Borgstedt.

October 7 — We acted too soon, sending Socks back to the dog-pound! Says the Chronicler: "This a.m. discovered Steuben grapes had been ravaged by deer. Picked remainder."

Between August 7 and September 9 — arrival of three candidates, James Ward, Daniel Regan and Thomas Johnson.